

## Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:AFIRFER:BK

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R 202019Z MAY 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

UNCLAS STATE 124021

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE

1. TODAY'S "WASHINGTON POST" CARRIED STORY BY JOANNE OMANG FROM PANAMA REPORTING THAT CARLOS A. LOPEZ-GUEVARA SAID THAT THE DAY GERALD FORD WAS SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT HE ASSURED TORRIJOS IN WRITING THAT TREATY TALKS WOULD CONTINUE UNDER THE 1974 GUIDELINES THAT CALL FOR THE EVENTUAL TRANSFER OF THE PANAMA CANAL AND ELIMINATION OF PERMANENT U.S. INTEREST. IN PREPARATION FOR POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS THE FOLLOWING Q AND A WAS PREPARED.

2. QUESTION. IS IT TRUE, AS REPORTED IN TODAY'S WASHINGTON POST AND ALLEGED BY ONE OF THE PANAMANIAN TREATY NEGOTIATORS THAT PRESIDENT FORD, UPON BEING SWORN IN, WROTE A LETTER TO GENERAL TORRIJOS REAFFIRMING HIS INTENTIONS TO CONTINUE TREATY TALKS ALONG THE LINES OF THE 1974 KISSINGER-TACK AGREEMENT? ANSWER. I'LL GO INTO THE SUBSTANCE: THE PRESIDENT HAS REPEATEDLY MADE IT KNOWN, IN PUBLIC, THAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IS PLEDGED TO TRY TO CONCLUDE AN EQUITABLE NEW TREATY WITH PANAMA...FOR THE CANAL BETTER THAN THEY ARE PROTECTED BY THE EXISTING  
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TREATY. AND OF COURSE AMBASSADOR BUNKER HAS REITERATED

THAT PLEDGE TO THE PANAMANIAN CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT ON

BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY. AS FOR  
WHETHER THERE WAS A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: AS  
ALWAYS IN SUCH CASES, I REFER YOU TO THE WHITE HOUSE.  
I MIGHT SAY THAT ON THE DAY PRESIDENT FORD ASSUMED OFFICE  
THAT THE SECRETARY COMMUNICATED WITH A NUMBER OF FOREIGN  
MINISTERS, INCLUDING TACK OF PANAMA, TO REAFFIRM THE CON-  
TINUITY OF OUR FOREIGN POLICIES.

3. NOTE QUESTION WAS NOT ASKED IN DEPARTMENT BRIEFING  
TODAY. ROBINSON

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
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